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SOCIALIZATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL

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By this subject I mean making the high school meet the needs of society and of the community, making the subjects of a high-school course such as will open a direct approach to life. I do not mean by the term that the high schools should be cocoons and bee cells, from which will emerge the butterflies and drones of society. Schools have arisen because of the needs of society. This is true, not only of public schools, but also of our commercial colleges, so called, special schools, and technical and classical colleges. The Latin grammar school, which prepared for college in an age when Latin was the language in which many nations recorded their legal, scientific, theological, and literary contributions, passed out of existence because laws and treatises are no longer written in Latin; the academy, which was a finishing school for boys and which offered a wider range of subjects than the Latin grammar school, either merged into free public high schools or became distinguished as schools preparatory for colleges.

In 1870 there were only 160 free high schools in this country; ten years ago there were 8,000; today there are more than 14,000. Does not this indicate clearly that the public high school is an institution arising out of the increasing needs of society? "The high school is supported by the taxes of the whole people; it educates the children of the whole people; it must therefore provide for an adequate and proper education of the children of the whole people, of those who enter the industrial pursuits as well as of those who enter the so-called learned professions."

To arouse and develop the worthy potentialities of each pupil until they became actualities is one of the problems of the high school that has only recently received its share of attention from educators. The elementary school has been more or less successful in making the three R's more practical and in adding some sub-

jects that will connect with the home or with industrial pursuits such as domestic science, art, manual training, etc. Colleges and technical schools have specialized to meet the needs of men and women. After the readjustment below and above the high school, the secondary-school problems have come upon us like an avalanche. Industrial and financial conditions have changed greatly; professional requirements have increased many fold; society interests and relations are becoming more and more complex and exacting; the government, which formerly protected the individual in the exercise of his legal rights, has changed its function to protecting him in the exercise of his human rights. With these rapidly changing conditions on every side, can we satisfy our consciences by offering courses of study suitable to mediaeval times?

When you consider that the adolescent period is the time when the men-to-be are trying out their different powers, forming their habits of thinking and doing, and assuming their attitudes toward social, political, ethical, and religious questions, you will agree with Wellington and Gladstone that the high school is the strategic stronghold in the endeavor to make efficient men and women.

We have seen that the object of the Latin school was to prepare for college, and that the academy offered a liberal course for those who could not go to college. The high school must not neglect the 5 per cent who are preparing for college, as these furnish a high percentage of the leaders of the "masses" in public and private life. On the other hand, we must not forget that the educational standard of the community or state in a democracy is based upon mass education, and not upon class education as is found in a monarchy. The stability of a republic rests on the level of the morality and intelligence of all the people.

The colleges should soon recognize that they have a duty to society as well as to the individual. They should appreciate that the requirements for admission to college are no higher than those for citizenship in the best sense; that is, when it is possible for a boy to choose from the high-school course those subjects which will enable him to do a man's work in the shop or store, and thereby be incapacitated for admission to college, there is something radically wrong with the college-entrance requirements. The col-

lege owes recognition and inspiration to the high schools that seek to serve community needs.

Davis says, "If mental discipline be the desideratum for admission to college, may not subject-matter that has a rich content for practical life also be made to furnish as desirable and as satisfactory mental discipline as do the traditional subjects, the social utilities of which have been largely lost."

The members of the committee on reorganization of the secondary schools decided to plan the work for the child of twelve to eighteen years of age, thereby committing themselves to some form of the six-six plan. The child of twelve becomes a different being. He becomes skeptical about his faith, does not take his teachers and his parents into his confidence, wants to know the why and wherefore of the facts. To continue to cram down his throat the *ipse dixit* of his teacher without being convinced of its truthfulness would be to disregard the psychology of this period, would be as though you should try to keep the butterfly in the cocoon or the eagle in the nest.

The course of study has always been the battleground, and will be in every progressive school. What subjects shall be required, what kind of electives and how many shall be offered, and how they shall be elected, are some of the many questions that are ever present. That the course of study must be changed to meet changing conditions is evident to everyone who in this day of electric light has discarded the tallow candle. What a high school should offer depends on so many factors, that its place in the great system of education is constantly in process of evolution. Hence, no program of studies in time, in character, can be fixed with any degree of permanency. Certain subjects include, according to Bagley, "the priceless elements of the heritage of race experience"; these should be found in every course of study, because they afford a community of ideas that are necessary in a democracy. In fact, an important function of education in a democracy is to furnish a basis for common discussion of common problems. This does not mean that because a subject had some utilitarian value in by-gone ages it should remain, as do some atrophied muscles and organs in our bodies; indeed, an operation, painful to some teachers, may be necessary to rid the course of study of an obstruction to progress.

The course of study should assist a great majority of pupils in self-discovery. This is the great advantage of the cosmopolitan high school. Frequently, some pupil's course is changed during the semester, and at the end many changes are made. Some time ago the teacher of mechanical drawing and shopwork told me that one of the boys would waste his time if he continued to prepare for engineering. The boy is now taking another course and is doing good work. Two girls who failed to get shorthand after trying it twice were transferred to another course. All the senses, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, must be developed to the capacity of each. Memory training only does not develop the whole child. As Dr. Eliot has recently pointed out, "Mental action and reaction is strongest when eyes, ears, and hands, and the whole nervous system, the memory, and the discriminating judgment are at work together. The changes which ought to be made immediately in the programs of American secondary schools, in order to correct the glaring deficiencies of the present programs, are chiefly: the introduction of more hand, ear, and eye work—such as drawing, carpentry, turning, music, sewing, and cooking—and the giving of much more time to the sciences of observation—chemistry, physics, biology, and geography, not political, but geological and ethnographical geography."

By surrounding the adolescent with these as rising bells we may avert the "dreadful tragedy in the loss of real personalities who have all the native endowments of genius and leadership, but who for lack of proper environmental stimuli have remained undeveloped and unknown. We form the habit of thinking of great men as having appeared only at long intervals, and yet we know that great crises always discover great men. What does this mean but that the men are ready formed and that it requires only this extra stimulus to call them forth. Whatever the stimulus required, whether pride or shame, fear or favor, ambition or loyalty, responsibility or necessity, education should utilize each and all of these to teach men self-knowledge and self-control."¹

The curricula should be planned for the whole boy and girl and should be taught by all-round, vitalized, and vitalizing teachers. The subjects offered to each pupil should "provide two sorts of

¹ Conklin, *Heredity and Environment*.

education—one to fit him to work and the other to fit him to live.” When the pupil has completed his course, his certificate should give prominence to the physical attainments as well as to the intellectual.

Hence the course must be well balanced. “The body is not one member, but many. The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” Doesn’t this sound as though Paul would approve liberal and vocational education if he were writing to the Corinthians today? In the past the pupil who had brains, interest, and ambition had no trouble in finding suitable courses in the high-school course. And, as has been stated, this group must not be ignored. Similarly, instruction must be provided for the adolescent whether he be normal, subnormal, or retarded, in order to keep him in school as long as possible. Teachers realize that they cannot maintain the high standards of scholarship that they formerly obtained. As someone has said, “We have pointed to the number of *fine* graduates; we *will* point to the fine *number* of graduates.” However, great care must be exercised that the pupils who get diplomas from any high school have finished in a creditable manner the prescribed studies; that they can do something well; that they are not deceived by thinking that they have a good preparation for the office, shop, or higher school, when in reality they have only a smattering; that they have attained a high degree of accuracy, of skill, of continued application to hard tasks, of honesty in use of time outside of the office or shop as well as inside.

The curricula for the early years of the high school, which according to the six-six plan are the seventh and eighth grades, should contain not only the worthy traditional subjects, but should also offer subjects that appeal to the motor and constructive interest and powers of the pupils, and that may be more or less vocational in character. The courses should be flexible enough to meet the reasonable choice of the pupils, and yet this flexibility should not lead to “elective chaos,” since immature pupils may confuse liberty and license. One valid objection to elective studies is that pupils in our high schools specialize too early, or scatter their efforts by picking out the easy subjects or lenient teachers. Most pupils are not qualified to select the best curriculum.

Not what is easy, but what is vital, determines which subjects should be included in the course of study. To include only what pleases or interests the pupil may be to omit the essential things in preparing for life. To let him or her enter school or class late with tasks undone does not train for the exacting demands in the community where competition is keen. Pupils must be made to realize that they will get *out of the school* a preparation in proportion to the thought and time they put *into the school*. Time and concentration are just as necessary to make a clearly defined and lasting impression on the mind as on the sensitive plate. If pupils are permitted to take only those subjects that they like, they may get training and skill along a narrow line, but they may sacrifice that broad training which alone gives power of adaptability. The wise school administrator recognizes the great changes that are taking place in the industrial and business world, and stresses the education that has developed many of the higher nerve centers and organized many groups of ideas which will enable the man to adapt himself to changing conditions. One great objection to overspecialization before seventeen years of age is that only a few of the nerve centers are called into action; the pupil is trained or skilled for so few operations, that when changes come in the factory or business, he loses his position because he has no power of adapting himself. Dean Leete of Carnegie Institute of Technology says, "You can't build an intensive knowledge of one thing upon extensive ignorance of all things."

All of the changes are not to be made in the subject-matter of the course of study. The greatest change will be in the spirit of the course of instruction. While the so-called practical subjects have come to stay, they must be raised to the high standard of the academic subjects in efficiency, and the academic subjects must be made more practical. The teacher of science will cease to use the mediaeval pieces of apparatus and use present-day appliances of the farm, the factory, and the kitchen. He will draw upon the industries of his community for illustrations; e.g., the rural teacher will show that capillarity is illustrated by the preparation and cultivation of the soil. He can show how to detect formaldehyde in milk, organic matter in water, poisonous preservatives in meat and vegetables. He will impress his pupils with the fact that good

crops are largely chemical and physical reactions. Our teacher of trigonometry takes his pupils to the shop, and they work out a formula for cutting the gear of a cog-wheel. A textbook in geometry asks the pupils to find out how far back a football should be carried, after a touchdown has been made 25 feet from the nearest goal post, so that the goal can be more certainly kicked. Similar methods will give new life to a subject that has been merely a form of mental gymnastics for many. If more of the topics selected for compositions, especially for oral work, would deal with the vocations of the community and with the prospective vocations of the pupils, the part of English most disliked by many boys would become the most interesting and useful. Children learn by doing, and this is a great argument in favor of dramatization of literature. When the recitation in civics is freed from the dry routine of textbook work and becomes the clearing-house of the practical work done by members of the class in the community, then the boys and girls will be made to feel with Dr. Dewey that "school is not a preparation for life; it is life." Other subjects lend themselves to socialization as readily as these.

The cosmopolitan high school may be the great melting-pot of our cities. To segregate those who are going to college from those who are preparing for industrial or commercial life may engender snobbishness and lead to social division on a false basis of education or vocation. We don't want to transplant the stratified society of Europe into democratic United States. Pupils of high-school age should develop sympathy and respect for phases and conditions of life other than their own. This is more easily accomplished where all classes meet on a common basis in the recitation rooms and on the playground. The tolerance of the viewpoints of the college-preparatory and industrial pupils on the part of the commercial pupil better prepares him to enter the business world, where he must respect the views of his various patrons. The cosmopolitan high school has greater possibilities of generating power that will make for higher manhood than has the special school.

All of the so-called outside activities of the high school, when properly guided and guarded, are tributaries to the great, broad current of culture and knowledge. These activities should be made

the basis of organizations where the relations of the individual to society and of society to the individual may be learned at first hand. These organizations should be self-directed as far as the pupil is concerned, but at the same time guided by the wise teacher, both to control any individual who may be a menace to the organization and to give such aid as may be given by a master-hand.

The social needs of the high-school pupil are so important that they ought to be included, not only in the subject-matter of the studies and in the selection of teachers for the course, but also in the plans of the schoolhouse. While the social life of the school may not be concerned primarily with evening parties in the school building or elsewhere, yet it will not be ignored by those teachers and principals who appreciate the tremendous dynamic force of the social impulses of the high-school boy and girl. Neglected, the social life may ruin body and soul; controlled and guided, its possibilities for the good of the individual and the community are immeasurable. This means that the social life is only a part of the school, and that it must never detract from the serious business of study.

The hours outside of school, the leisure of men and women, demand more than passing notice. To assume a negative attitude on the question of one's avocation is often to destroy one's efficiency in his vocation. To shorten the hours of labor without enriching the life of the laborer is to give him more hours in which to lower his vitality and morals. The hours of leisure make more criminals and loafers than do the hours of labor. Shall the hours of leisure promote enlightenment, culture, and progress, or promote degeneracy, depravity, and decay? The one encourages the beautiful in music, art, and literature; the other seeks satisfaction in prize fights and the common vices. The cultural subjects become extremely utilitarian for the leisure hours. The great need in our changing social life is an equipment for the right use of leisure.

Social activities are recognized factors in character development. Character is to the individual what muscle is to the athlete. Neither is made by lectures or sermonettes. They are made by action, by struggle. As teachers and administrators, we must

plan activities that will develop and strengthen the character as well as the body.

Should the high school be socialized? Yes; schools that trained only for individual ends have long since failed, and have been succeeded by schools that educate the individual for social service; conditions and customs have changed, and the schools must change their methods and equipment so that their pupils will be able to do their work; the adolescent must be taken as he is and not as we wish him to be. To meet the new obligations, some reorganization may be necessary. Many of our courses of study and textbooks must be re-written, in order that the needs and capacities of the largest number of pupils may be met. Co-operative courses will assist many boys and girls to find themselves. Colleges must recognize that the highest mission of our high school is to raise the level of thinking of all of the people, to give concrete information and impulse for social living, and to develop moral intelligence, judgment, and purpose, so that our pupils may be as well prepared for the community as for college. All of the activities and associations ought to be used to give pupils experience with real motives and actions. The school must widen its field and must provide for the entire child by requiring, if necessary, that all pupils take some industrial work throughout the course; each building must be provided with a library, clubrooms, dancing-rooms, a gymnasium, a dining-room, an assembly room, etc., and should be open throughout the afternoon and evening to serve as a clubhouse and recreation center (under proper arrangements and supervision) for the student body and their friends. The wider use of the school-plant for evening classes has made many enthusiastic friends for the high school who are made to realize that the high school as an institution is trying to meet the needs of the entire community. Teachers' training schools and colleges must give more practical work in these broader fields; and the teachers in our high schools must realize that the social and moral welfare of each pupil largely depends upon their attitude and activity, that they must look beyond the daily or yearly work and get a new vision of the responsibility of high-school teachers in training their pupils to be useful members of society, with all that that implies.